

# Hoping for \$10-a-day child care? Here's how many Toronto daycares opted in to the federal program <sup>[1]</sup>

While most of the city's 1,054 licensed child care providers have joined, 169 providers — 16% — opted out or did not respond by Nov. 1 deadline.

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## AVAILABILITY

Access online <sup>[2]</sup>

## EXCERPTS

One in six licensed daycares in Toronto are not participating in the national \$10-a-day child-care program this year, leaving many parents already paying the highest daycare costs in the country without promised rebates or fee reductions.

While the majority of the city's 1,054 licensed child care providers have joined the Canada-wide plan, 169 providers — 16 per cent — opted out or did not respond by the province's Nov. 1 deadline, according to data released by the City of Toronto on Wednesday.

The uptake was lower among for-profit providers, which account for roughly 30 per cent of the city's licensed daycares. Sixty-seven per cent of for-profits signed on to the program, compared to 91 per cent of non-profits.

Parents whose daycares have signed on to the program have or will soon receive a 25-per-cent rebate for daycare fees retroactive to April 1. Fees will be cut again by the end of this year, with the goal of reducing them to an average of \$10-a-day by 2026.

Centres that choose not to participate are free to continue charging market rates.

A city spokesperson said operators who did not respond will still have an opportunity to opt-in next year or in the future.

Ontario has not yet released province-wide numbers. Karina Gould, the federal minister responsible for child care, tweeted Tuesday that 85 per cent of providers in Ontario had signed on "with more coming."

This is the first year of the federal Liberals' \$30-billion national child-care program, which promises to dramatically reduce parent fees, increase spaces and improve wages in the sector. The plan excludes unlicensed daycares.

In its agreement with Ottawa, Ontario promised to implement cost controls to ensure public money is spent wisely. The federal government provides the funding to the province, which then sends it through municipal managers who oversee the program.

For Laura Barzelai, the decision by her for-profit daycare to opt out this year "was a gut punch."

Barzelai has two children — a 1-year-old and 2-year-old — enrolled at the Little Angels Childcare Learning Centre in Toronto's west-end. She said she pays about \$4,000 per month.

She loves the staff at Little Angels and the care her children receive, but now she feels "like a sucker" who "picked the wrong centre," she said.

"This is money that we could have put toward our RESP, or extracurriculars or our mortgage or whatever."

In a letter to parents, Little Angels' director Natalia Cojuhari said funding should have been delivered directly to parents in the form of a tax credit, and that the "amount of government intrusion" required by the program "is both alarming and bordering on a socialist approach."

"We are not a part of the government and we are not a public service," she writes. "The government has no right to demand this level of control."

In an email, Cojuhari told the Star she understands there are "a few families that are unhappy and disappointed," but she stands by her decision.

She said she made that decision, in part, because the city, which manages the federal program locally, has yet to provide a contract for her to review.

A city spokesperson responded that a draft agreement has been posted online since August, and providers must opt-in to receive a detailed service agreement. Opting-in is the first step in the process, the spokesperson said, adding that daycare providers can revisit their decision after reviewing the detailed agreement.

Carolyn Ferns, of the Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care, which advocates for public and non-profit child care, said that the Toronto numbers suggest that some daycares believe, at least in the short term, that they "can continue to operate with their current business model of charging full fees to families."

"And they're not wrong, because where else are these families going to go," Ferns said. "I think what it's going to take for them to rethink this is an outcry from parents."

Since the spring, when Ontario became the last province to reach agreement with Ottawa on the national child care plan, some for-profit daycare owners have voiced strong opposition to the deal, saying that it would put them out of business.

Intense pressure from these for-profit owners has transformed Ontario's rollout, a Star investigation found, prompting the province to strip some checks and balances from its funding rules.

Observers said the changes, which alarmed the federal government, threatened to compromise a program that is supposed to transform the current market-based system into one that is universally accessible and affordable.

Ontario Education Minister Stephen Lecce, who oversees child care in the province, did not directly respond to questions for this story. In a statement he said Ontario is "putting families first by ensuring parents have access to affordable child care that gives parents the choice to pursue the options that work best for them and their kids. We're pleased to see that an overwhelming majority of Ontario child-care providers have agreed to sign-on."

His office has previously defended the province's rollout, saying Ontario is focused on getting "all partners on board," while "also supporting small-business women entrepreneurs who are the majority of for-profit owners."

Ferns said she is hopeful the Ford government will look at the opt-in numbers in Toronto, and realize that "they can't continue to try to appease these for-profit

providers.”

“The province needs to learn that lesson now,” she said.

**Region:** Ontario <sup>[3]</sup>

**Tags:** CWELCC <sup>[4]</sup>

\$10-a-day child care <sup>[5]</sup>

non-profit child care <sup>[6]</sup>

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**Source URL (modified on 7 Nov 2022):** <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/22/11/hoping-10-day-child-care-here%E2%80%99s-how-many-toronto-daycares-opted>  
**Links**

[1] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/22/11/hoping-10-day-child-care-here%E2%80%99s-how-many-toronto-daycares-opted> [2]

[https://www.thestar.com/news/investigations/2022/11/03/hoping-for-10-a-day-child-care-heres-how-many-toronto-daycares-opted-in-to-the-federal-program.html?](https://www.thestar.com/news/investigations/2022/11/03/hoping-for-10-a-day-child-care-heres-how-many-toronto-daycares-opted-in-to-the-federal-program.html?source=newsletter&utm_content=a06&utm_source=ts_nl&utm_medium=email&utm_email=682614FEC6EAAAC73C63F67D8D0DEC430&utm_campaign=teve_152335)

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[3] <https://childcarecanada.org/taxonomy/term/7856> [4] <https://childcarecanada.org/taxonomy/term/9278> [5] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/10-day-child-care> [6]

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